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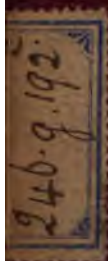
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SI MARK'S REST

PART III.

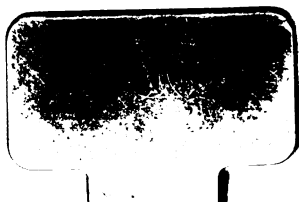
VIII. THE REQUIEM.

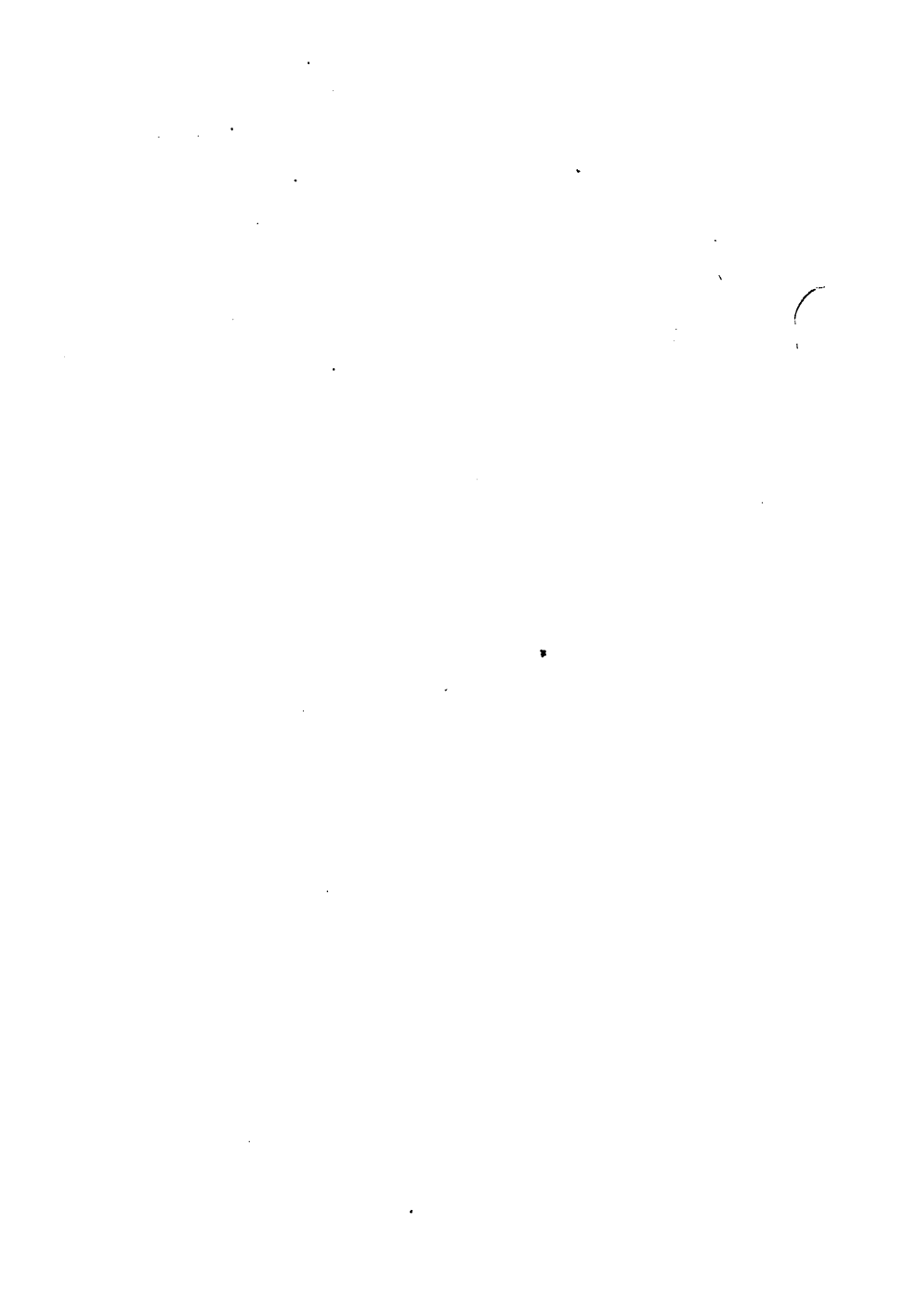
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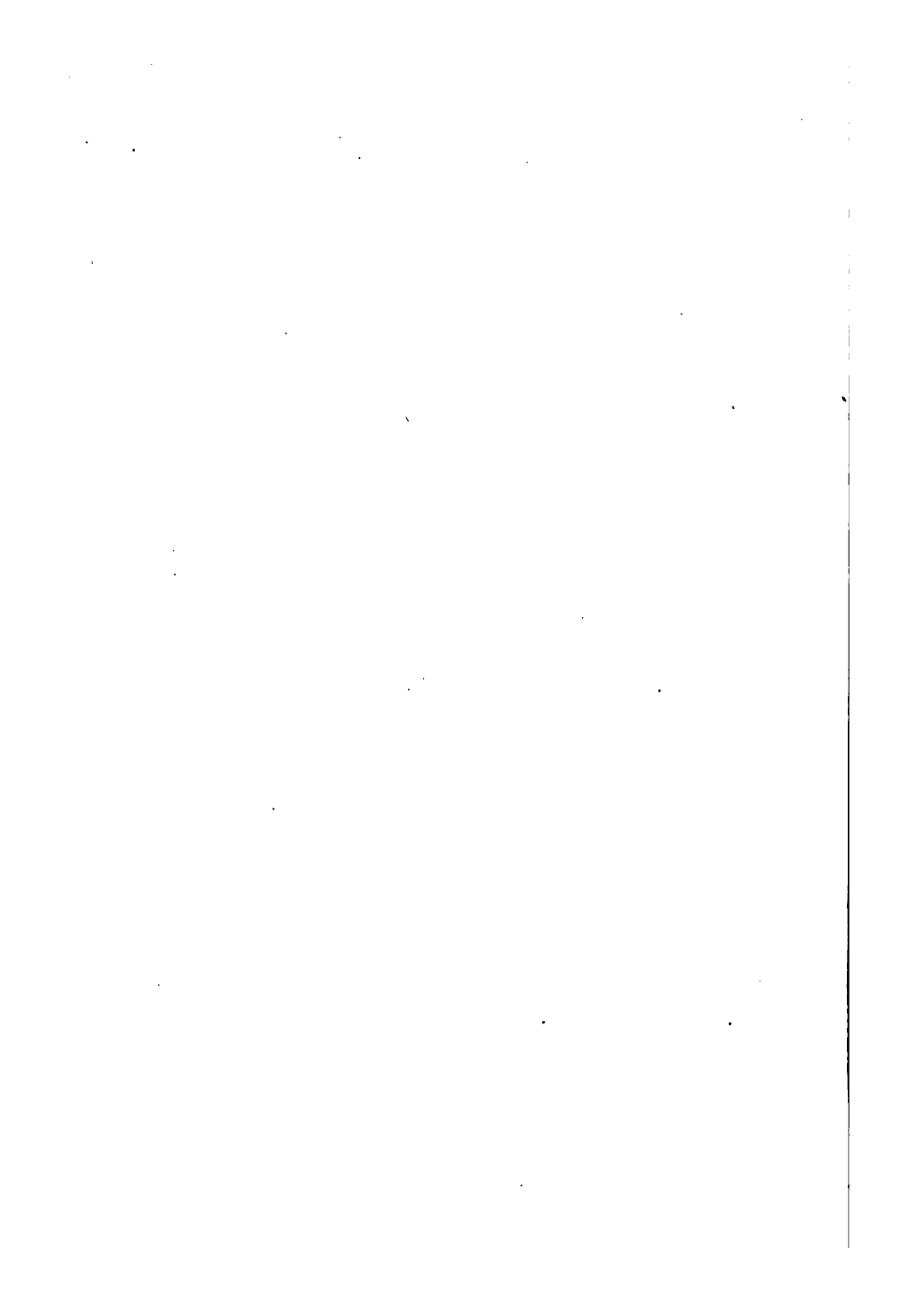




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ST. MARK'S REST.

THE HISTORY OF VENICE

*WRITTEN FOR THE HELP OF THE FEW TRAVELLERS WHO
STILL CARE FOR HER MONUMENTS.*

BY

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PART III.

GEORGE ALLEN,
SUNNYSIDE, ORPINGTON, KENT.

1879.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE REQUIEM.

1. As I re-read the description I gave, thirty years since, of St. Mark's Church ;—much more as I remember, forty years since, and before, the first happy hour spent in trying to paint a piece of it, with my six-o'clock breakfast on the little café table beside me on the pavement in the morning shadow, I am struck, almost into silence, by wonder at my own pert little Protestant mind, which never thought for a moment of asking what the Church had been built for !

Tacitly and complacently assuming that I had had the entire truth of God preached to me in Beresford Chapel in the Walworth Road,—recognizing no possible Christian use or propriety in any other sort of chapel elsewhere; and perceiving, in this bright phenomenon before me, nothing of more noble function than might be in some new and radiant sea-shell, thrown up for me on the sand ;—nay, never once so much as thinking, of the fair shell itself, “ Who built its domed whorls, then ? ” or “ What manner of creature lives in the inside ? ” Much less ever asking, “ Who is lying dead therein ? ”

2. A marvellous thing—the Protestant mind !

Don't think I speak as a Roman Catholic, good reader : I am a mere wandering Arab, if that will less alarm you, seeking but my cup of cold water in the desert ; and I speak only as an Arab, or an Indian,—with faint hope of ever seeing the ghost of Laughing Water. A marvellous thing, nevertheless, I repeat,—this Protestant mind ! Down in Brixton churchyard, all the fine people lie inside railings, and their relations expect the passers-by to acknowledge reverently who's *there* :—nay, only last year, in my own Cathedral churchyard of Oxford, I saw the new grave of a young girl fenced about duly with carved stone, and overlaid with flowers ; and thought no shame to kneel for a minute or two at the foot of it,—though there were several good Protestant persons standing by.

But the old leaven is yet so strong in me that I am very shy of being caught by any of my country people kneeling near St. Mark's grave.

"Because—you know—it's all nonsense : it isn't St. Mark's—and never was,"—say my intellectual English knot of shocked friends.

I suppose one must allow much to modern English zeal for genuineness in all commercial articles. Be it so. Whether God ever gave the Venetians what they thought He had given, does not matter to us ; He gave them at least joy and peace in their imagined treasure, more than we have in our real ones.

And he gave them the good heart to build this chapel over the cherished grave, and to write on the walls of it, St. Mark's gospel, for all eyes,—and, so far as their power went, for all time.

3. But it was long before I learned to read that ; and even when, with Lord Lindsay's first help, I had begun spelling it out,—the old Protestant palsy still froze my heart, though my eyes were unsealed ; and the preface to the Stones of Venice was spoiled, in the very centre of its otherwise good work, by that blunder, which I've left standing in all its shame, and with its hat off—like Dr. Johnson repentant in Lichfield Market,—only putting the note to it “ Fool that I was ! ” (page 11).* I fancied actually that the main function of St. Mark's was no more than of our St. George's at Windsor, to be the private chapel of the king and his knights ;—a blessed function that also, but how much lower than the other ?

4. “ Chiesa DUCALE.” It never entered my heart once to think that there was a greater Duke than her Doge, for Venice ; and that she built, for her two Dukes, each their palace, side by side.

* Scott himself (God knows I say it sorrowfully, and not to excuse my own error, but to prevent *his* from doing more mischief,) has made just the same mistake, but more grossly and fatally, in the character given to the Venetian Procurator in the ‘ Talisman.’ His error is more shameful, because he has confused the institutions of Venice in the fifteenth century with those of the twelfth.

The palace of the living, and of the,—Dead,—
was he then—the other Duke?

“VIVA SAN MARCO.”

You wretched little cast-iron gaspipe of a cockney that you are, who insist that your soul's your own, (see ‘Punch’ for 15th March, 1879, on the duties of Lent,) as if anybody else would ever care to have it! is there yet life enough in the molecules, and plasm, and general mess of the making of you, to feel for an instant what that cry once meant, upon the lips of men?

Viva, Italia! you may still hear that cry sometimes, though she lies dead enough. Viva, Vittor—Pisani!—perhaps also that cry, yet again.

But the answer,—“Not Pisani, but St. Mark,” when will you hear *that* again, nowadays? Yet when those bronze horses were won by the Bosphorus, it was St. Mark's standard, not Henry Dandolo's, that was first planted on the tower of Byzantium,—and men believed—by his own hand. While yet his body lay here at rest: and this, its requiem on the golden scroll, was then already written over it—in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

In Hebrew, by the words of the prophets of Israel.

In Greek, by every effort of the building labourer's hand, and vision to his eyes.

In Latin, with the rhythmic verse which Virgil had taught,—calm as the flowing of Mincio.

But if you will read it, you must understand

now, once for all, the method of utterance in Greek art,—here, and in Greece, and in Ionia, and the isles, from its first days to this very hour.

5. I gave you the bas-relief of the twelve sheep and little caprioling lamb for a general type of all Byzantine art, to fix in your mind at once, respecting it, that its intense first character is symbolism. The thing represented means more than itself,—is a sign, or letter, more than an image.

And this is true, not of Byzantine art only, but of all Greek art, *pur sang*. Let us leave, to-day, the narrow and degrading word 'Byzantine.' There is but one Greek school, from Homer's day down to the Doge Selvo's; and these St. Mark's mosaics are as truly wrought in the power of Daedalus, with the Greek constructive instinct, and in the power of Athena, with the Greek religious soul, as ever chest of Cypselus or shaft of Erechtheum. And therefore, whatever is represented here, be it flower or rock, animal or man, means more than it is in itself. Not sheep, these twelve innocent woolly things,—but the twelve voices of the gospel of heaven;—not palm-trees, these shafts of shooting stem and beaded fruit,—but the living grace of God in the heart, springing up in joy at Christ's coming;—not a king, merely, this crowned creature in his sworded state,—but the justice of God in His eternal Law;—not a queen, nor a maid only,

this Madonna in her purple shade,—but the love of God poured forth, in the wonderfulness that passes the love of woman. *She* may forget—yet will I not forget thee.

6. And in this function of his art, remember, it does not matter to the Greek how far his image be *perfect* or not. That it should be *understood* is enough,—if it can be beautiful also, well; but its function is not beauty, but instruction. You cannot have purer examples of Greek art than the drawings on any good vase of the Marathonian time. Black figures on a red ground,—a few white scratches through them, marking the joints of their armour or the folds of their robes,—white circles for eyes,—pointed pyramids for beards,—you don't suppose that in these the Greek workman thought he had given the likeness of gods? Yet here, to his imagination, were Athena, Poseidon, and Herakles,—and all the powers that guarded his land, and cleansed his soul, and led him in the way everlasting.

7. And the wider your knowledge extends over the distant days and homes of sacred art, the more constantly and clearly you will trace the rise of its symbolic function, from the rudest fringe of racing deer, or couchant leopards, scratched on some ill-kneaded piece of clay, when men had yet scarcely left their own cave-couchant life,—up to the throne of Cimabue's Madonna. All forms, and ornaments, and images,

have a moral meaning as a natural one. Yet out of all, a restricted number, chosen for an alphabet, are recognized always as given letters, of which the familiar scripture is adopted by generation after generation.

8. You had best begin reading the scripture of St. Mark's on the low cupolas of the baptistery,—entering, as I asked you many a day since, to enter, under the tomb of the Doge Andrea Dandolo.

You see, the little chamber consists essentially of two parts, each with its low cupola: one containing the Font, the other the Altar.

The one is significant of Baptism with water unto repentance.

The other of Resurrection to newness of life.

Burial, in baptism with water, of the lusts of the flesh. Resurrection, in baptism by the spirit—here, and now, to the beginning of life eternal.

Both the cupolas have Christ for their central figure: surrounded, in that over the font, by the Apostles baptizing with water; in that over the altar, surrounded by the Powers of Heaven, baptizing with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Each of the Apostles, over the font, is seen baptizing in the country to which he is sent.

Their legends, written above them, begin over the door of entrance into the church, with St. John the Evangelist, and end with St. Mark—the order of all being as follows:—

St. John the Evangelist baptizes in	Ephesus.
St. James	Judæa.
St. Philip	Phrygia.
St. Matthew	Ethiopia.
St. Simon	Egypt.
St. Thomas	India.
St. Andrew	Achaia.
St. Peter	Rome.
St. Bartholomew	(legend indecipherable).
St. Thaddeus	Mesopotamia.
St. Matthias	Palestine.
St. Mark	Alexandria.

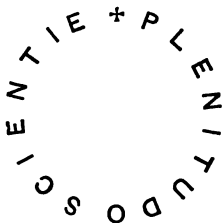
Over the door is Herod's feast. Herodias' daughter dances with St. John Baptist's head in the charger, on her head,—simply the translation of any Greek maid on a Greek vase, bearing a pitcher of water on her head.

I am not sure, but I believe the picture is meant to represent the two separate times of Herod's dealing with St. John; and that the figure at the end of the table is in the former time, St. John saying to him, "It is not lawful for thee to have her."

9. Pass on now into the farther chapel under the darker dome.

Darker, and very dark;—to my old eyes, scarcely decipherable; to yours, if young and bright, it should be beautiful, for it is indeed the origin of all those golden-domed backgrounds of Bellini, and Cima, and Carpaccio; itself a Greek vase, but with new Gods. That ten-winged cherub in

the recess of it, behind the altar, has written on the circle on its breast, "Fulness of Wisdom."



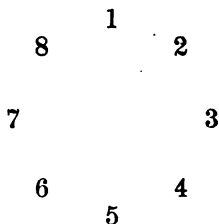
It is the type of the Breath of the Spirit. But it was once a Greek Harpy, and its wasted limbs remain, scarcely yet clothed with flesh from the claws of birds that they were.

At the sides of it are the two powers of the Seraphim and Thrones: the Seraphim with sword; the Thrones (TRONIS), with *Fleur-de-lys* sceptre,—lovely.

Opposite, on the arch by which you entered are The Virtues, (VIRTUTES).

A dead body lies under a rock, out of which spring two torrents—one of water, one of fire. The Angel of the Virtues calls on the dead to rise.

Then the circle is thus completed:



1, being the Wisdom angel; 8, the Seraphim; 2, the thrones; and 5, the Virtues. 3. Dominations. 4. Angels. 6. Potentates. 7. Princes: the last with helm and sword.

Above, Christ Himself ascends, borne in a whirlwind of angels; and, as the vaults of Bellini and Carpaccio are only the amplification of the Harpy-Vault, so the Paradise of Tintoret is only the final fulfilment of the thought in this narrow cupola.

10. At your left hand, as you look towards the altar, is the most beautiful symbolic design of the Baptist's death that I know in Italy. Herodias is enthroned, not merely as queen at Herod's table, but high and alone, the type of the Power of evil in pride of womanhood, through the past and future world, until Time shall be no longer.

On her right hand is St. John's execution; on her left, the Christian disciples, marked by their black crosses, bear his body to the tomb.

It is a four-square canopy, round arched; of the exact type of that in the museum at Perugia, given to the ninth century; but that over Herodias is round-trefoiled, and there is no question but that these mosaics are not earlier than the thirteenth century.

And yet they are still absolutely Greek in all modes of thought, and forms of tradition. The Fountains of fire and water are merely forms of the Chimera and the Peirene; and the maid

dancing, though a princess of the thirteenth century in sleeves of ermine, is yet the phantom of some sweet water-carrier from an Arcadian spring.

11. These mosaics are the only ones in the interior of the church which belong to the time (1204) when its façade was completed by the placing of the Greek horses over its central arch, and illumined by the lovely series of mosaics still represented in Gentile Bellini's pictures, of which one only now remains. That *one*, left nearly intact—as Fate has willed—represents the church itself so completed ; and the bearing of the body of St. Mark into its gates, with all the great kings and queens who have visited his shrine, standing to look on ; not conceived, mind you, as present at any actual time, but as always looking on in their hearts.

12. I say it is left *nearly* intact. The three figures on the extreme right are restorations ; and if the reader will carefully study the difference between these and the rest ; and note how all the faults of the old work are caricatured, and every one of its beauties lost—so that the faces which in the older figures are grave or sweet, are in these three new ones as of staring dolls,—he will know, once for all, what kind of thanks he owes to the tribe of Restorers—here and elsewhere.

Please note, farther, that at this time the church had round arches in the second story, (of which the shells exist yet,) but no pinnacles or marble fringes.

All that terminal filigree is of a far later age. I take the façade as you see it stood—just after 1204—thus perfected. And I will tell you, so far as I know, the meaning of it, and of what it led to, piece by piece.

13. I begin with the horses,—those I saw in my dream in 1871,—“putting on their harness.” See ‘*Ariadne Florentina*,’ p. 203.

These are the sign to Europe of the destruction of the Greek Empire by the Latin. They are chariot horses—the horses of the Greek quadriga,—and they were the trophies of Henry Dandolo. That is all you need know of them just now ;—more, I hope, hereafter ; but you must learn the meaning of a Greek quadriga first. They stand on the great outer archivolt of the façade : its ornaments, to the front, are of leafage closing out of spirals into balls interposed between the figures of eight Prophets (or Patriarchs?)—Christ in their midst on the keystone. No one would believe at first it was thirteenth-century work, so delicate and rich as it looks ; nor is there anything else like it that I know, in Europe, of the date :—but pure thirteenth-century work it is, of rarest chiselling. I have cast two of its balls with their surrounding leafage, for St. George’s Museum ; the most instructive pieces of sculpture of all I can ever show there.

14. Nor can you at all know how good it is, unless you will learn to draw : but some things

concerning it may be seen, by attentive eyes, which are worth the dwelling upon.

You see, in the first place, that the outer foliage is all of one kind—pure Greek Acanthus,—not in the least transforming itself into ivy, or kale, or rose: trusting wholly for its beauty to the varied play of its own narrow and pointed lobes.

Narrow and pointed—but not jagged; for the jagged form of Acanthus, look at the two Jean d'Acre columns, and return to this—you will then feel why I call it *pure*; it is as nearly as possible the acanthus of early Corinth, only more flexible, and with more incipient blending of the character of the vine which is used for the central bosses. You see that each leaf of these last touches with its point a stellar knot of inwoven braid; (compare the ornament round the low archivolt of the porch on your right below), the outer acanthus folding all in spiral whorls.

15. Now all thirteenth-century ornament of every nation runs much into spirals, and Irish and Scandinavian earlier decoration into little else. But these spirals are different from theirs. The Northern spiral is always elastic—like that of a watch-spring. The Greek spiral, drifted like that of a whirlpool, or whirlwind. It is always an eddy or vortex—not a living rod, like the point of a young fern.

At least, not living its own life—but under

another life. It is under the power of the Queen of the Air; the power also that is over the Sea, and over the human mind. The first leaves I ever drew from St. Mark's were those drifted under the breathing of it;* these on its uppermost cornice, far lovelier, are the final perfection of the Ionic spiral, and of the thought in the temple of the Winds.

But perfected under a new influence. I said there was nothing like them (that I knew) in European architecture. But there is, in Eastern. They are only the amplification of the cornice over the arches of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem.

16. I have been speaking hitherto of the front of the arch only. Underneath it, the sculpture is equally rich, and much more animated. It represents,—What think you, or what would you have, good reader, if you were yourself designing the central archivolt of your native city, to companion, and even partly to sustain, the stones on which those eight Patriarchs were carved—and Christ?

The great men of your city, I suppose,—or the good women of it? or the squires round about it? with the Master of the hounds in the middle? or the Mayor and Corporation? Well. That last guess comes near the Venetian mind, only it is not my Lord Mayor, in his robes of state, nor the Corporation at their city feast; but the mere Crafts-

* See the large plate of two capitals in early folio illustrations.

men of Venice—the Trades, that is to say, depending on handicraft, beginning with the shipwrights, and going on to the givers of wine and bread—ending with the carpenter, the smith, and the fisherman.

Beginning, I say, if read from left to right, (north to south,) with the shipwrights ; but under them is a sitting figure, though sitting, yet supported by crutches. I cannot read this symbol: one may fancy many meanings in it,—but I do not trust fancy in such matters. Unless I know what a symbol means, I do not tell you my own thoughts of it.

17. If, however, we read from right to left, Oriental-wise, the order would be more intelligible. It is then thus :

1. Fishing.
 2. Forging.
 3. Sawing. Rough carpentry?
 4. Cleaving wood with axe. Wheelwright?
 5. Cask and tub making.
 6. Barber-surgery.
 7. Weaving.
- Keystone—Christ *the Lamb*; i.e., in humiliation.
8. Masonry.
 9. Pottery.
 10. The Butcher.
 11. The Baker.
 12. The Vintner.

13. The Shipwright. And

14. The rest of old age?

18. But it is not here the place to describe these carvings to you,—there are none others like them in Venice except the bases of the piazzetta shafts; and there is little work like them elsewhere, pure realistic sculpture of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: I may have much to say of them in their day—not now.

Under these labourers you may read, in large letters, a piece of history from the Vienna Morning Post—or whatever the paper was—of the year 1815, with which we are not concerned, nor need anybody else be so, to the end of time.

Not with that; nor with the mosaic of the vault beneath—flaunting glare of Venetian art in its ruin. No vestige of old work remains till we come to those steps of stone ascending on each side over the inner archivolt; a strange method of enclosing its curve; but done with special purpose. If you look in the Bellini picture, you will see that these steps formed the rocky midst of a mountain which rose over them for the ground, in the old mosaic; the Mount of the Beatitudes. And on the vault above, stood Christ blessing for ever—not as standing on the Mount, but supported above it by Angels.

19. And on the archivolt itself were carved the Virtues—with, it is said, the Beatitudes; but I am not sure yet of anything in this archivolt,

except that it is entirely splendid twelfth-century sculpture. I had the separate figures cast for my English museum, and put off the examination of them when I was overworked. The Fortitude, Justice, Faith, and Temperance are clear enough on the right—and the keystone figure is Constancy, but I am sure of nothing else yet: the less that interpretation partly depended on the scrolls, of which the letters were gilded, not carved:—the figures also gilded, in Bellini's time.

Then the innermost archivolt of all is of mere twelfth-century grotesque, unworthy of its place. But there were so many entrances to the atrium that the builders did not care to trust special teaching to any one, even the central, except as a part of the façade. The atrium, or outer cloister itself, was the real porch of the temple. And *that* they covered with as close scripture as they could—the whole Creation and Book of Genesis pictured on it.

20. These are the mosaics usually attributed to the Doge Selvo: I cannot myself date any mosaics securely with precision, never having studied the technical structure of them; and these also are different from the others of St. Mark's in being more Norman than Byzantine in manner; and in an ugly admittance and treatment of nude form, which I find only elsewhere in manuscripts of the tenth and eleventh centuries of the school of Monte Cassino and South Italy. On the other hand,

they possess some qualities of thought and invention almost in a sublime degree. But I believe Selvo had better work done under him than these. Better work at all events, you shall now see—if you will. You must get hold of the man who keeps sweeping the dust about, in St. Mark's; very thankful he will be, for a lira, to take you up to the gallery on the right-hand side, (south, of St. Mark's interior ;) from which gallery, where it turns into the south transept, you may see, as well as it is possible to see, the mosaic of the central dome.

21. Christ enthroned on a rainbow, in a sphere supported by four flying angels underneath, forming white pillars of caryatid mosaic. Between the windows, the twelve apostles, and the Madonna, —alas, the head of this principal figure frightfully 'restored,' and I think the greater part of the central subject. Round the circle enclosing Christ is written, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye at gaze? This Son of God, Jesus, so taken from you, departs that He may be the arbiter of the earth: in charge of judgment He comes, *and to give the laws that ought to be.*"

22. Such, you see, the central thought of Venetian worship. Not that we shall leave the world, but that our Master will come to it: and such the central hope of Venetian worship, that He shall come to *judge* the world indeed; not in a last and destroying judgment, but in an enduring and

saving judgment, in truth and righteousness and peace. Catholic theology of the purest, lasting at all events down to the thirteenth century; or as long as the Byzantines had influence. For these are typical Byzantine conceptions; how far taken up and repeated by Italian workers, one cannot say; but in their gravity of purpose, meagre thinness of form, and rigid drapery lines, to be remembered by you with distinctness as expressing the first school of design in Venice, comparable in an instant with her last school of design, by merely glancing to the end of the north transept, where that rich piece of foliage, full of patriarchs, was designed by Paul Veronese. And what a divine picture it might have been, if he had only minded his own business, and let the mosaic workers mind theirs!—even now it is the only beautiful one of the late mosaics, and shows a new phase of the genius of Veronese. All I want you to feel, however, is the difference of temper from the time when people liked the white pillar-like figures of the dome, to that when they liked the dark exuberance of those in the transept.

23. But from this coign of vantage you may see much more. Just opposite you, and above, in the arch crossing the transept between its cupola and the central dome, are mosaics of Christ's Temptation, and of his entrance to Jerusalem. The upper one, of the Temptation, is entirely characteristic of the Byzantine mythic manner

of teaching. On the left, Christ sits in the rocky cave which has sheltered Him for the forty days of fasting: out of the rock above issues a spring—meaning that He drank of the waters that spring up to everlasting life, of which whoso drinks shall never thirst; and in His hand is a book—the living Word of God, which is His bread. The Devil holds up the stones in his lap.

Next the temptation on the pinnacle of the Temple, symbolic again, wholly, as you see,—in very deed quite impossible: so also that on the mountain, where the treasures of the world are, I think, represented by the glittering fragments on the mountain top. Finally, the falling Devil, cast down head-foremost in the air, and approaching angels in ministering troops, complete the story.

24. And on the whole, these pictures are entirely representative to you of the food which the Venetian mind had in art, down to the day of the Doge Selvo. Those were the kind of images and shadows they lived on: you may think of them what you please, but the historic fact is, beyond all possible debate, that these thin dry bones of art were nourishing meat to the Venetian race: that they grew and throve on that diet, every day spiritually fatter for it, and more comfortably round in human soul:—no illustrated papers to be had, no Academy Exhibition to be seen. If their eyes were to be entertained at all, such must be their lugubrious delectation; pleasure difficult enough

to imagine, but real and pure, I doubt not; even passionate. In as quite singularly incomprehensible fidelity of sentiment, my cousin's least baby has fallen in love with a wooden spoon; Paul not more devoted to Virginia. The two are inseparable all about the house, vainly the unimaginative bystanders endeavouring to perceive, for their part, any amiableness in the spoon. But baby thrives in his pacific attachment,—nay, is under the most perfect moral control, pliant as a reed, under the slightest threat of being parted from his spoon. And I am assured that the crescent Venetian imagination did indeed find pleasantness in these figures; more especially,—which is notable—in the extreme emaciation of them,—a type of beauty kept in their hearts down to the Vivarini days; afterwards rapidly changing to a very opposite ideal indeed.

25. Nor even in its most ascetic power, disturbing these conceptions of what was fitting and fair in their own persons, or as a nation of fishermen. They have left us, happily, a picture of themselves, at their greatest time—unnoticed, so far as I can read, by any of their historians, but left for poor little me to discover—and that by chance—like the inscription on St. James's of the Rialto.

But before going on to see this, look behind you, where you stand, at the mosaic on the west wall of the south transept.

It is not Byzantine, but rude thirteenth-century,

and fortunately left, being the representation of an event of some import to Venice, the recovery of the lost body of St. Mark.

You may find the story told, with proudly polished, or loudly impudent, incredulity, in any modern guide-book. I will not pause to speak of it here, nor dwell, yet, on this mosaic, which is clearly later than the story it tells by two hundred years. We will go on to the picture which shows us things as they *were*, in its time.

26. You must go round the transept gallery, and get the door opened into the compartment of the eastern aisle, in which is the organ. And going to the other side of the square stone gallery, and looking back from behind the organ, you will see opposite, on the vault, a mosaic of upright figures in dresses of blue, green, purple, and white, variously embroidered with gold.

These represent, as you are told by the inscription above them—the Priests, the Clergy, the Doge, and the people of Venice; and are an abstract, at least, or epitome of those personages, as they were, and felt themselves to be, in those days.

I believe, early twelfth-century—late eleventh it might be—later twelfth it may be,—it does not matter : these were the people of Venice in the central time of her unwearied life, her unsacrificed honour, her unabated power, and sacred faith. Her Doge wears, not the contracted shell-like cap,

but the imperial crown. Her priests and clergy are alike mitred—not with the cloven, but simple, cap, like the conical helmet of a knight. Her people are also her soldiers, and their Captain bears his sword, sheathed in black.

So far as features could be rendered in the rude time, the faces are *all* noble—(one horribly restored figure on the right shows what *ignobleness*, on this large scale, modern brutality and ignorance can reach); for the most part, dark-eyed, but the Doge brown-eyed and fair-haired, the long tresses falling on his shoulders, and his beard braided like that of an Etruscan king.

27. And this is the writing over them.

PONTIFICES. CLERUS. POPULUS. DUX MENTE SERENUS.*

The Priests. the Clergy. the People. the Duke, serene of mind.

Most Serene Highnesses of all the after Time and World,—how many of you knew, or know, what this Venice, first to give the title, meant by her Duke's Serenity! and why she trusted it?

The most precious "historical picture" this, to my mind, of any in worldly gallery, or unworldly cloister, east or west; but for the present, all I

* The continuing couplet of monkish Latin,

"Laudibus atque choris
Excipiunt dulce canoris,"

may perhaps have been made worse or less efficient Latin by some mistake in restoration.

care for you to learn of it, is that these were the kind of priests, and people, and kings, who wrote this Requiem of St. Mark, of which, now, we will read what more we may.

28. If you go up in front of the organ, you may see, better than from below, the mosaics of the eastern dome.

This part of the church must necessarily have been first completed, because it is over the altar and shrine. In it, the teaching of the Mosaic legend begins, and in a sort ends ;—‘ Christ, the King,’ foretold of Prophets—declared of Evangelists—born of a Virgin in due time !

But to understand the course of legend, you must know what the Greek teachers meant by an Evangelion, as distinct from a Prophecy. Prophecy is here thought of in its narrower sense as the foretelling of a good that is to be.

But an Evangelion is the voice of the Messenger, saying, it is *here*.

And the four mystic Evangelists, under the figures of living creatures, are not types merely of the men that are to bring the Gospel message, but of the power of that message in all Creation—so far as it was, and is, spoken in all living things, and as the Word of God, which is Christ, was present, and not merely prophesied, in the Creatures of His hand.

29. You will find in your Murray, and other illumined writings of the nineteenth century,

various explanations given of the meaning of the Lion of St. Mark—derived, they occasionally mention, (nearly as if it had been derived by accident!) from the description of Ezekiel.* Which, perhaps, you may have read once on a time, though even that is doubtful in these blessed days of scientific education;—but, boy or girl, man or woman, of you, not one in a thousand, if one, has ever, I am well assured, asked what was the *use* of Ezekiel's Vision, either to Ezekiel, or to anybody else; any more than I used to think, myself, what St. Mark's was built for.

In case you have not a Bible with you, I must be tedious enough to reprint the essential verses here.

30. "As I was among the Captives by the River of Chebar, the Heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God."

(Fugitive at least,—and all *but* captive,—by the River of the deep stream,—the Venetians perhaps cared yet to hear what he saw.)

"In the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, the word of the Lord came *expressly* unto Ezekiel the Priest."

(We also—we Venetians—have our Pontiffes; we also our King. May we not hear?)

"And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came

* Or, with still more enlightened Scripture research, from "one of the visions of Daniel"! (Sketches, etc., p. 13.)

out of the north, and a fire infolding itself. Also in the midst thereof was* the likeness of Four living Creatures.

"And this was the aspect of them; the Likeness of a Man was upon them.

"And every one had four faces, and every one four wings. And they had the hands of a Man under their wings. And their wings were stretched upward, two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies. And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, the noise of an Host."

(To us in Venice, is not the noise of the great waters known—and the noise of an Host? May we hear also the voice of the Almighty?)

"And they went every one straight forward. Whither the Spirit was to go, they went. And this was the likeness of their faces: they four had the face of a Man" (to the front), "and the face of a Lion on the right side, and the face of an Ox on the left side, and" (looking back) "the face of an Eagle."

And not of an Ape, then, my beautifully-browed cockney friend?—the unscientific Prophet! The face of Man; and of the wild beasts of the earth, and of the tame, and of the birds of the air. This was the Vision of the Glory of the Lord.

* What alterations I make are from the Septuagint.

31. "And as I beheld the living creatures, behold, *one* wheel upon the earth, by the living creatures, with *his* four faces, . . . and their aspect, and their work, was as a wheel in the midst of a wheel."

Crossed, that is, the meridians of the four quarters of the earth. (See Holbein's drawing of it in his Old Testament series.)

"And the likeness of the Firmament upon the heads of the living creatures was as the colour of the terrible crystal.

"And there was a voice from the Firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, *and had let down* their wings.

"And above the Firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a Throne; and upon the likeness of the Throne was the likeness of the Aspect of a Man above, upon it.

"And from His loins round about I saw as it were the appearance of fire; and it had brightness round about, as the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain. This was the appearance of the likeness of the Glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face."

32. Can any of us do the like—or is it worth while?—with only apes' faces to fall upon, and the forehead that refuses to be ashamed? Or is there, nowadays, no more anything for *us* to be afraid of, or to be thankful for, in all the wheels, and flame, and light, of earth and heaven?

This that follows, after the long rebuke, is their Evangelion. This the sum of the voice that speaks in them, (chap. xi. 16).

"Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord. Though I have cast them far off among the heathen, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the places whither they shall come.

"And I will give them one heart; and I will put a new spirit within them; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh. That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances and do them, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

"Then did the Cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above."

33. That is the story of the Altar-Vault of St. Mark's, of which though much was gone, yet, when I was last in Venice, much was left, wholly lovely and mighty. The principal figure of the Throned Christ was indeed for ever destroyed by the restorer; but the surrounding Prophets, and the Virgin in prayer, at least retained so much of their ancient colour and expression as to be entirely noble,—if only one had nobility enough in one's own thoughts to forgive the failure of any other human soul to speak clearly what it had felt of most divine.

My notes have got confused, and many lost;

and now I have no time to mend the thread of them: I am not sure even if I have the list of the Prophets complete; but these following at least you will find, and (perhaps with others between) in this order—chosen, each, for his message concerning Christ, which is written on the scroll he bears.

34.

1. On the Madonna's left hand, Isaiah.
"Behold, a virgin shall conceive."
(Written as far as 'Immanuel.')
2. Jeremiah. "Hic est in quo,—Deus Noster."
3. Daniel. "Cum venerit" as far as to
"cessabit unctio."
4. Obadiah. "Ascendit sanctus in Monte Syon."
5. Habakkuk. "God shall come from the South, and the Holy One from Mount Paran."
6. Hosea. (Undeciphered.)
7. Jonah. (Undeciphered.)
8. Zephaniah. "Seek ye the Lord, all in the gentle time" (in mansueti tempore).
9. Haggai. "Behold, the desired of all nations shall come."
10. Zachariah. "Behold a man whose name is the Branch." (*Oriens.*)
11. Malachi. "Behold, I send my messenger," etc. (angelum meum).

12. Solomon. "Who is this that ascends as the morning?"

13. David. "Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne."

35. The decorative power of the colour in these figures, chiefly blue, purple, and white, on gold, is entirely admirable,—more especially the dark purple of the Virgin's robe, with lines of gold for its folds; and the figures of David and Solomon, both in Persian tiaras, almost Arab, with falling lappets to the shoulder, for shade; David holding a book with Hebrew letters on it and a cross, (a pretty sign for the Psalms;) and Solomon with rich orbs of lace like involved ornament on his dark robe, cusped in the short hem of it, over gold underneath. And note in all these mosaics that Byzantine 'purple,'—the colour at once meaning Kinghood and its Sorrow,—is the same as ours—not scarlet, but amethyst, and that deep.

36. Then in the spandrils below, come the figures of the four beasts, with this inscription round, for all of them.

"QUAEQUE SUB OBSCURIS
DE CRISTO DICTA FIGURIS
HIS APERIRE DATUR
ET IN HIS, DEUS IPSE NOTATUR."

"Whatever things under obscure figures have been said of Christ, it is given to *these*" (creatures) "to open; and in these, Christ himself is seen."

A grave saying. Not in the least true of mere

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Christ was never seen *in* them, though told of by them. But, as the Word by which all things were made, He is seen in all things made, and in the Poiesis of them: and therefore, when the vision of Ezekiel is repeated to St. John, changed only in that the four creatures are to him more distinct—each with its single aspect, and not each fourfold,—they are full of eyes within, and rest not day nor night,—saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come.”

37. We repeat the words habitually, in our own most solemn religious service; but we repeat without noticing out of whose mouths they come.

“Therefore,” (we say, in much self-satisfaction,) “with Angels and Archangels, and with all the Company of heaven,” (meaning each of us, I suppose, the select Company we expect to get into there,) “we laud and magnify,” etc. But it ought to make a difference in our estimate of ourselves, and of our power to say, with our hearts, that God is Holy, if we remember that we join in saying so, not, for the present, with the Angels,—but with the Beasts.

38. Yet not with every manner of Beast; for afterwards, when all the Creatures in Heaven and Earth, and the Sea, join in the giving of praise, it is only these four who can say ‘Amen.’

The Ox that treadeth out the corn; and the Lion that shall eat straw like the Ox, and lie

down with the lamb; and the Eagle that fluttereth over her young; and the human creature that loves its mate, and its children. In these four is all the power and all the charity of earthly life; and in such power and charity "Deus ipse notatur."

39. Notable, in that manner, He was, at least, to the men who built this shrine where once was St. Theodore's;—not betraying nor forgetting their first master, but placing his statue, with St. Mark's Lion, as equal powers upon their pillars of justice;—St. Theodore, as you have before heard, being the human spirit in true conquest over the inhuman, because in true sympathy with it—not as St. George in contest with, but being strengthened and pedestalled by, the "Dragons, and all Deepes."

40. But the issue of all these lessons we cannot yet measure; it is only now that we are beginning to be able to read them, in the myths of the past, and natural history of the present world. The animal gods of Egypt and Assyria, the animal cry that there is *no* God, of the passing hour, are, both of them, part of the rudiments of the religion yet to be revealed, in the rule of the Holy Spirit over the venomous dust, when the sucking child shall play by the hole of the asp, and the weaned child lay his hand on the cockatrice den.

41. And now, if you have enough seen, and understood, this eastern dome and its lesson, go

down into the church under the central one, and consider the story of that.

Under *its* angles are the four Evangelists themselves, drawn as men, and each with his name. And over *them* the inscription is widely different.*

“SIC ACTUS CHRISTI
DESCRIBUNT QUATUOR ISTI
QUOD NEQUE NATURA
LITER NENT, NEC UTRINQUE FIGURA.”

“Thus do these four describe the Acts of Christ. And weave his story, neither by natural knowledge, nor, contrariwise, by any figure.”

Compare now the two inscriptions. In the living creatures, Christ himself is seen by nature and by figure. But these four tell us his Acts, “Not by nature—not by figure.” How then?

42. You have had various “lives of Christ,” German and other, lately provided among your other severely historical studies. Some, critical; and some, sentimental. But there is only one light by which you can read the life of Christ, —the light of the life you now lead in the flesh; and that not the natural, but the won life. “Nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

* I give, and construe, this legend as now written, but the five letters ‘liter’ are recently restored, and I suspect them to have been originally either three or six, ‘cer’ or ‘discer.’ In all the monkish rhymes I have yet read, I don’t remember any awkward a division as this of natura-liter.

Therefore, round the vault, as the pillars of it, are the Christian virtues ; somewhat more in number, and other in nature, than the swindling-born and business-bred virtues which most Christians nowadays are content in acquiring. But these old Venetian virtues are compliant also, in a way. They are for sea-life, and there is one for every wind that blows.

43. If you stand in mid-nave, looking to the altar, the first narrow window of the cupola—(I call it first for reasons presently given) faces you, in the due east. Call the one next it, on your right, the second window ; it bears east-south-east. The third, south-east ; the fourth, south-south-east ; the fifth, south ; the ninth, west ; the thirteenth, north ; and the sixteenth east-north-east.

The Venetian Virtues stand, one between each window. On the sides of the east window stand Fortitude and Temperance ; Temperance the first, Fortitude the last ; “he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.”

Then their order is as follows : Temperance between the first and second windows,—(quenching fire with water) ;—between the second and third, Prudence ; and then, in sequence,

III. Humility.

IV. Kindness, (Benignitas).

V. Compassion.

VI. Abstinence.

- VII. Mercy.
- VIII. Long-suffering.
- IX. Chastity.
- X. Modesty.
- XI. Constancy.
- XII. Charity.
- XIII. Hope.
- XIV. Faith.
- XV. Justice.
- XVI. Fortitude.

44. I meant to have read all their legends, but 'could do it any time,' and of course never did!—but these following are the most important. Charity is put twelfth as the last attained of the virtues belonging to human life only: but she is called the "Mother of the Virtues"—meaning, of them all, when they become divine; and chiefly of the four last, which relate to the other world. Then Long-suffering, (*Patientia*), has for her legend, "Blessed are the Peacemakers"; Chastity, "Blessed are the Pure in Heart"; Modesty, "Blessed are ye when men hate you"; while Constancy (consistency) has the two heads, balanced, one in each hand, which are given to the keystone of the entrance arch: meaning, I believe, the equal balance of a man's being, by which it not only stands, but stands as an arch, with the double strength of the two sides of his intellect and soul. "*Qui sibi constat.*" Then note that 'Modestia' is here not merely shamefacedness, though it

includes whatever is good in that; but it is contentment in being thought little of, or hated, when one thinks one ought to be made much of—a very difficult virtue to acquire indeed, as I know some people who know.

45. Then the order of the circle becomes entirely clear. All strength of character begins in temperance, prudence, and lowliness of thought. Without these, nothing is possible, of noble humanity: on these follow—kindness, (simple, as opposed to malice,) and compassion, (sympathy, a much rarer quality than mere kindness); then, *self-restriction*, a quite different and higher condition than temperance,—the first being not painful when rightly practised, but the latter always so; —(“I held my peace, even from good”—“quanto quisque sibi plura negaverit, ab Dis plura feret”). Then come pity and longsuffering, which have to deal with the sin, and not merely with the sorrow, of those around us. Then the three Trial virtues, through which one has to struggle forward up to the power of Love, the twelfth.

All these relate only to the duties and relations of the life that is now.

But Love is stronger than Death; and through her, we have, first, Hope of life to come; then, surety of it; living by this surety, (the Just shall live by Faith,) Righteousness, and Strength to the end. Who bears on her scroll, “The Lord shall break the teeth of the Lions.”

46. An undeveloped and simial system of human life—you think it—cockney friend!

Such as it was, the Venetians made shift to brave the war of this world with it, as well as ever you are like to do; and they had, besides, the joy of looking to the peace of another. For, you see, above these narrow windows, stand the Apostles, and the two angels that stood by them on the Mount of the Ascension; and between these the Virgin; and with her, and with the twelve, you are to hear the angels' word, "Why stand ye at gaze? as He departs; so shall He come, to give the Laws that ought to be."

DEBITA JURA,

a form of 'debit' little referred to in modern ledgers, but by the Venetian acknowledged for all devoirs of commerce and of war; writing, by his church, of the Rialto's business, (the first words, these, mind you, that Venice ever speaks aloud,) "Around this Temple, let the Merchant's law be just, his weights true, and his covenants faithful." And writing thus, in lovelier letters, above the place of St. Mark's Rest,—

"Brave be the living, who live unto the Lord;
For Blessed are the dead, that die in Him."

NOTE.—The mosaics described in this number of St. Mark's Rest being now liable at any moment to destruction—from causes already enough specified, I have undertaken, at the instance of Mr. Edward Burne Jones, and with promise of that artist's helpful superintendence, at once to obtain some permanent record of them, the best that may be at present possible: and to that end I have already dispatched to Venice an accomplished young draughtsman, who is content to devote himself, as old painters did, to the work before him for the sake of that, and his own honour, at journeyman's wages. The three of us, Mr. Burne Jones, and he, and I, are alike minded to set our hands and souls hard at this thing: but we can't, unless the public will a little help us. I have given away already all I have to spare, and can't carry on this work at my own cost; and if Mr. Burne Jones gives his time and care gratis, and without stint, as I know he will, it is all he should be asked for. Therefore, the public must give me enough to maintain my draughtsman at his task: what mode of publication for the drawings may be then possible, is for after-consideration. I ask for subscriptions at present to obtain the copies only. The reader is requested to refer also to the final note appended to the new edition of the 'Stones of Venice,' and to send what subscription he may please to my publisher, Mr. G. Allen, Sunnyside, Orpington, Kent.

